

COMMENCEMENT ACTIVITIES

The board endorses graduation activities and ceremonies. The date of graduation shall annually be recommended by the chief school administrator and approved by the board.

Graduation shall not occur prior to completion of the required 180 days of pupil instruction.

Guidelines for Graduation Year Activities/Graduation Procedures/Ceremonies

No pupil will be permitted to participate in graduation ceremonies unless all graduation requirements have been met.

Pupil participation in graduation year activities will require conduct of the highest caliber in all school situations.

Criteria for exclusion from these activities shall include but not limited to:

- A. Recurring inappropriate behaviors
- B. Consistent involvement in disciplinary action(s);
- C. Suspension;
- D. Collaborative evaluation by the staff.
- E. Unexcused absences from rehearsal
- F. Not clear of all school obligations

The final decision shall be made by the chief school administrator.

Pupils and parents/guardians shall be given advance notification of these criteria.

No pupil shall be barred from participation in graduation ceremonies for arbitrary or discriminatory reasons. A pupil who may be prevented from participation and his/her parents/guardians shall be so notified in advance and no later than two days prior to the close of the school year.

When a pupil or his/her parents/guardians experiences financial hardship and is unable to pay the costs of participation in graduation ceremonies, the board shall assume the costs of the following items:

- A. Rental or purchase of cap and gown;
- B. One year book;

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C. Other, as may be determined by the board.

Financial hardship shall be defined by eligibility standards for free and reduced price meals under the state school lunch program.

The board reserves the right to deny participation in graduation activities when extreme circumstances warrant it. Such denial shall be treated in the same manner as a suspension and the pupil so affected shall be afforded the rights of review provided in policies of this board.

The board reserves the right to withhold a diploma and transcripts until all fines are paid.

Awarding of Diplomas

A board member shall present a copy of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of the United States and the amendments thereto, and the Constitution of the State of New Jersey and the amendments thereto to each pupil upon graduation from elementary school.

The president of the board of education and/or another designated member of the board shall award the diplomas. Board members and former board members shall be afforded the opportunity to award diplomas to their own children.

Commencement Speakers

The first commencement speaker will be the Valedictorian. Should the Valedictorian choose not to speak the next in line would be the Salutatorian. Should the Salutatorian choose not to speak, the selection will proceed in the line of ascension.

In case of tie for Valedictorian those tied shall all have the opportunity to speak.

The second speaker will be the class president.

Adopted: July 14, 2003

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| Legal References: <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:7C-5.1 | Boards of education prohibited from excluding students from graduation ceremony or from obtaining yearbook for inability to pay fees |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:11-1 | General mandatory powers and duties |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:36-18 | Books containing organic laws at graduation |
| <u>N.J.S.A.</u> 18A:54-20 | Powers of board (county vocational schools) |

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N.J.A.C. 6A:8-5.1 et seq. Implementation of Graduation Requirements

Ballato v. Long Branch Board of Education, 1990 S.L.D. (August 20)

Lee v. Weisman, 112 S.Ct. 2649 (1992)

American Civil Liberties Union v. Blackhorse Pike Regional Board of Education,
84 F.3d
1471 (3d Cir. 1996)